

VZCZCXRO1125
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHKL #0173 0291101
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 291101Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8378
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 000173

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [KISL](#) [RP](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: MALAYSIA'S OTHMAN APPEARS SUPPORTIVE OF U.S.-MILF
CONTACTS

REF: A. MANILA 281 - PEACE PROCESS MOVING FORWARD

[1](#)B. 06 KUALA LUMPUR 2235 - OTHMAN OPTIMISTIC

Classified By: Political Section Chief Mark D. Clark, reasons 1.4 (b and d).

[1](#)1. (C) Malaysian facilitator for the GRP-MILF peace talks Othman Abdul Razak appeared supportive of another U.S. Mission Manila meeting in February with MILF leaders (ref A), in response to polchief's explanation of the mission on January 29. Othman wished the American team success in its meeting with the MILF. He volunteered as useful many of the same points that Manila plans to raise with the MILF, to include: international attention on the peace process and appreciation for MILF's engagement in talks; the U.S. supportive role; peace dividends; the need for the MILF to disassociate itself from terrorists; and U.S. military activity in Mindanao. Regarding the final point, MILF leaders were "not comfortable" with perceived U.S. military activities in Mindanao. Othman asked if there were further details regarding the visit by the USS Blue Ridge, particularly the rationale for the vessel's port call in General Santos. Othman added another plug for U.S. assistance to the leadership training center being developed in Cotabato City and to capacity building in general for MILF's future role in civilian governance. Othman asked polchief for a read-out following Embassy Manila's meeting with the MILF, and jokingly noted that if the discussion goes poorly, he will probably learn about the results before anyone else in Malaysia at least.

[1](#)2. (C) Othman noted that the MILF-Government Peace Talks were still classified as "deadlocked" and he would not rush to call another round of informal negotiation if there were not promise of progress. The two sides still remained "far apart" on the issue of territory. As a result, the schedule of talks he had described in early December (ref B) had fallen several months behind. Othman expressed some optimism, however, regarding the increased creativity shown by both sides represented by the GRP's introduction of self-determination and the various uses of concepts of the Moro homeland, the Moro autonomous region, and Moro ancestral domain. Economic issues, including rights to off-shore natural gas reserves, were seen as increasingly important to the MILF. Othman raised criticism that he was biased in favor of the MILF, explaining his view that the MILF had given up their key demand -- independence -- and Manila needed to respond in a "sincere" manner. Othman saw the MILF-MNLF dynamic as important to the final settlement, but Moros themselves needed to work on relations between the two groups (Othman made no mention of plans to engage in a reconciliation effort). Othman said Philippines President Arroyo remaining in power was key to the peace process.

Assuming progress in the coming months, Othman would not attempt to schedule any announcement of a tentative peace deal just prior to the Philippines elections for fear this plays into the hands of Arroyo's opponents.

13. (C) Comment: Othman seemed to appreciate the advance notice of Embassy Manila's next meeting with the MILF. We presented this information in the spirit of keeping Othman informed in the event MILF consulted him, rather than seeking Othman's blessing.

LAFLEUR